

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8781

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL IZMIR

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CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

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TAGS: PINT, TU

SUBJECT: THE EFFECTS OF PARTY CROSSOVERS IN PARLIAMENT

REF: ANKARA 2863

SUMMARY: THE WAVE OF PARTY SWITCHING IN PARLIAMENT WHICH HAS PRECEDED THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE ON THE NATIONALIST FRONT GOVERNMENT HAS COME UNDER PUBLIC CRITICISM AND MAY WELL DAMAGE BOTH PARTY DISCIPLINE AND VOTER CONFIDENCE. END SUMMARY

1. THE SHIFTS OF PARLIAMENT MEMBERS' PARTY ALLEGIANCE IN THE CURRENT POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE NATIONALIST FRONT AND ITS OPPONENTS PRELIMINARY TO THE GOVERNMENT'S INITIAL VOTE OF CONFIDENCE APRIL 12 ARE COMING UNDER INCREASING CRITICISM FROM
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PARLIAMENTARIANS AND THE PRESS. THERE IS A FEAR THAT THE ATTEMPTS

BY PARTIES TO LURE AWAY EACH OTHERS' MEMBERS JUST BEFORE THE CONFIDENCE VOTE MAY CAUSE LASTING HARM IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. MILLIYET'S ABDI IPEKCI REFLECTED A COMMON VIEW WHEN HE WROTE APRIL 11 THAT THE SHIFTS OF PARTY LOYALTY ARE MAKING IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR THE PUBLIC "TO SHOW THE PARTIES THE PROPER RESPECT." ON THE SAME GROUNDS, ISMAIL ILHAN, AN INDEPENDENT SENATOR FROM MUS, HAS CALLED ON SENATE AND ASSEMBLY PRESIDENTS TO REMIND PARTY LEADERS OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD THE VOTERS AT THIS TIME. A VETERAN JUSTICE PARTY (JP) POLITICIAN, DISCUSSING THE SWITCHES WITH STRONG DISAPPROVAL, TOLD US HE HAD NOT SEEN SUCH A SPECTACLE IN HIS 14 YEARS IN PARLIAMENT.

2. THE SERIES OF "TRANSFERS" BEGAN WITH THE DECISION OF ORHAN BILGIC AND EIGHT COLLEAGUES TO RESIGN FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) AND SUPPORT THE NATIONALIST FRONT. SINCE THEN THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) HAS GAINED FOUR AND LOST ONE, THE REPUBLICAN RELIANCE PARTY (RR) HAS LOST FOUR (THEREBY DECREASING ITS LOWER HOUSE STRENGTH BELOW THE TEN SEATS REQUIRED FOR A PARLIAMENTARY GROUP), THE JP HAS GAINED ONE; AND THE NATIONAL SAVATION PARTY LOST TWO.

3. AMONG THE PUBLIC, THERE IS A WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT AT LEAST SOME OF THE INDIVIDUALS CONCERNED HAVE BEEN "BOUGHT OFF." SOME OBSERVERS HAVE COMMENTED THAT EVEN IF BILGIC QUIT SOLELY FOR IDEOLOGICAL REASONS, PUBLIC CYNICISM IS SUCH THAT THE DECISION TO QUIT AFTER A LONG WAVERING PERIOD STILL MAKES HIM AND HIS ASSOCIATES VULNERABLE TO "SELL OUT" OR BRIBERY CHARGES. SIMILAR CYNICISM APPLIES TO A NUMBER OF OTHERS WHO HAVE CHANGED PARTIES.

4. THE PRINCIPAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE INTERNECINE PARTY STRUGGLE TO STEAL EACH OTHER'S MEMBERS IS LIKELY TO BE THE EROSION OF PARTY DISCIPLINE, MEMBERS' MORALE AND VOTERS' CONFIDENCE. IF THE CROSSOVERS SHOULD BY CHANCE LEAD TO THE FORMATION OF AN EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT, THE DAMAGE MAY BE MINIMIZED; HOWEVER, THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT THIS WILL HAPPEN. THE OPPOSITION'S "TRANSFER" CAMPAIGN MAY SIMPLY DEPRIVE DEMIREL OF A MAJORITY WITHOUT ASSURING A MAJORITY FOR AN ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT. MACOMBER

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